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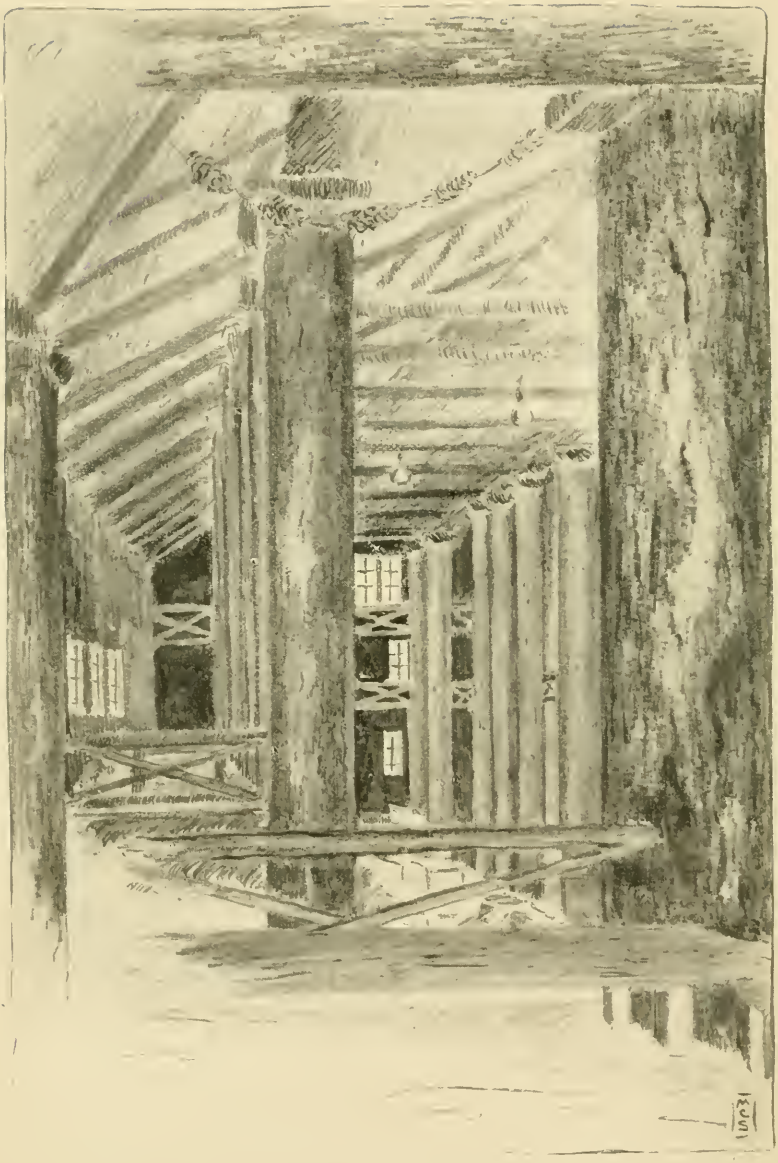

"IN THIS DEEP WOOD NO DRIP OF MURMURING STREAMS"

—In The Forestry Building

Voices of the City

BY

MARION COOK STOW

Author of "Where Flows Hood River" and
"The Child and the Dream"

WITH ORIGINAL DRAWINGS AND DECORATIONS

THE METROPOLITAN PRESS
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TO PORTLAND:

ITS GROWTH AND POWER

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I.

WHAT is this tumult borne upon the air,
This clamorous strife? O city, nearly great!
The benedictions of a knowing Fate
Have been but whispered, yet the inevitable care
Of each day's toil, where competition bare
Invigorates the fray, doth still await
Thy every hour; and all too passionate
Doth rule the courage that would win and dare.

Yet this thy call; this ceaseless, restless strain,
These hands outstretched for more,—nor pity sought
For calmer moments. . . . Evermore, I think,
Wilt thou be calling, evermore for gain!
But O beware, lest gold and fame be bought
With thy heart's blood. *Thou standest at the brink!*

THE
CALL
OF
THE
CITY

II.

I WANDER through the quaint, odd-looking
street
That speaks of other worlds; the dingy face
Of each tall front stares down. A passing
grace
Is lent by lanterned balconies, and sweet
Azalia blooms that tempt my loitering feet
To climb and see where in this sordid place,
Lurks beauty all unguessed; what curious race
Is this in which both art and grimness meet!

And, shuddering, I cast a furtive peep
Up dimly-lighted stairs that seem to keep
Their ghostly secrecy in light of day,
And call to eerie flights of mystery!
Lives piled on lives! How far away they seem!
And all this but the likeness of a dream!

IN
CHINATOWN

"A PASSING GRACE
IS LENT BY LANTERNED BALCONIES"

—In Chinatown

III.

DIM phantom ships moored to a phantom shore;
Athwart the sky in tangled maze, the spars
Cross and recross; low-hung beneath the stars,
The moon shines pale through mists of gray flung o'er
The city's smothered din. An hour before,
The west was all a-flame; now evening's bars
Shut out the day; earth's garish mind that wars
Within itself, tastes peace—and sighs for more.

The lazy river laps against the piers,
Stirred by a faint night-wind; cool shadows fall
And fill the silence; gleaming paths of gold
Shine from the harbor beacons . . Wandering years
Sink back upon themselves before it all,
And fancy leads away to night's dream-fold!

THE
HARBOR
AT
NIGHT

IV.

LIKE some caged bird within whose pluméd breast,
The fires of freedom burn a steady flare—
Though all in vain he beats the resisting air,
Mad with his longing—, so a sharp unrest
Is mine beneath these wires. I feel close-pressed,
Caught by a seeming net, within whose snare
Nor day nor night I hold a rightful share
Of liberty, full-breathing, man-expressed.

O beating wings! O flutter of delight
At empty spaces reaching to the night!
At seamless blue unmarred by crude device!
Men's aids and arts are purchased with a price,
And something of his finer self he yields
As entrance-fee into invention's fields.

WIRES

V.

WHEN from the mountains slip the loosening
snows,
And pussy-willows spread their furry tails;
When memory of erstwhile winter pales
Before spring's softer airs; when swifter flows
Each tiny, noisy stream and all earth knows
A fuller life and action that assails
Its every mood and phase; when wide prevails
The scents that waft the opening of the rose—

Oh then, from every open space and clear
Comes a familiar call—thrice-welcome sound!
A thrilling, flute-like note that cleaves the air
With sweetest music. Far above the ground
He rises, borne on swift, exultant wing—
The meadow lark, dear harbinger of spring!

THE
MEADOW LARK

"WHEN FROM THE MOUNTAINS SLIP THE LOOSENING SNOWS"

—The Meadow Lark

VI.

IF you should ask to what I might compare
These rose-strewn days, in truth I could not say;
This fragrant and bewildering array,
These masses that incense the very air
And make one well-nigh dizzy with their rare,
Intoxicating glory. Each new day
Brings inexhaustible delights. Away
With morbid moods! Away with gruesome care!

The city pours its crowd down every street
(All gaily bunting-swathed and banner-hung),
Nor rest they with the waning of the light;
For dazzling lamps the hues of day repeat,
And multi-colored gleams the robe that's flung
Across the stalwart shoulders of the night!

FESTIVAL
DAYS

VII.

VAST silence upon silence, huge, profound;
In this deep wood no drip of murmuring streams,
Nor sudden glory of warm solar beams;
Naught save the stillness; and above, around,
The dusky haze of twilight. Once the sound
Of countless happy birds awoke the dreams
Of these tremendous trees, and silver gleams
Of moonlight spread their covering on the ground.

And now behold, what wondrous change is wrought!
The trees in their immensity still stand,
But ranged are they down artificial aisles
In grim, majestic wonder. . . . What sad thought
Must fill their lonely night, since human hand
Is helpless in these man-made afterwhiles!

IN
THE
FORESTRY
BUILDING

VIII.

THE night grows pale; the fingers of the morn
Lay hold upon the day. Against the sky
The houses loom like sentinels with eye
Close on the dawn. A waking life is born
To all the waiting world. No more forlorn
And futile seems the strife; and industry
Grows roseate with hopes and prophecy,
And thoughts of men less weary and less worn.

Now glows the gray to gold, and shafts of light
Send amber gleams a-dancing o'er the town;
The city's pulse-beats quicken; hurrying feet
Dispel the sleeping thrall of sound and sight;
And when the sun hath climbed unto his own,
He finds submission to his reign complete!

DAWN

IX.

THRO' sunlit fields and wooded hills I come
(*Ye know me not for I am from afar*),
And in my birth-home naught there is to mar
The pure reflected day. The ceaseless hum
Of my own murmur is the quiet sum
Of aught that breaks the silence. All this war
Of petty tongues is stilled; the creeds that are
For life, are lived; and justice is not dumb.

But thou, O city! where can peace be found
Within thy gates, however fair they be?
Thou hast a glamour, yet thou dost not shine
As do the stars that swing their nightly round;
And all thy ways breathe not such honesty
As whispers from the forest's heart to mine.

THE
SONG
OF
THE
RIVER

X.

WITH some the street allures; its cleaving tide
(Its swirling sea of faces and of things),
An actual, imminent satisfaction brings.
This, then, their food; with this their needs allied;
On this wide stage their parts identified,
A-swing with action—like the huge three-rings
Of some great wonder-show which quite o'er-flings
Itself in modes and pleasures magnified.

I feel not so; give me the quiet airs
Of country lanes; the free and glad extent
Of star-specked blue at close of summer's day!
Here let me claim a virile thought that dares
To be its veritable self; here be content
To fashion life from something more than clay!

THE
STREET

"WITH SOME THE STREET ALLURES"

—The Street

XI.

WHEN ships go down into the waiting deep,
What various treasures fill each yawning hold,
From fields and forests dense; and, mayhap, gold
Forced from th' reluctant ore. Their trust to keep
This harvest for less favored lands to reap,
These dear-bought bounties truly manifold!
And daring are those hearts and doubly bold
Who thus the state's resources wrest from sleep.

But other things there be; the futile tears
Of mother-hearts—the parting and the pain!
And laddies far from home, with memories
Alone to cheer the weeks that may be years;
And so, I think, stored with the gold and grain,
The brave ships bear the burden of their sighs!

WHEN
SHIPS
GO
DOWN

XII.

O MYSTERY time! O wonder-breathing
night!
What chain of fellowship invisible
Unites the toiling hearts that with thee dwell!
How patient, at the waning of the light,
They take their stand, ere lost to waking sight,
To labor thro' the hours! How powerful
The link thus forged, tho' imperceptible,
That binds the days with weldings infinite!

The darkness is as naught. Instead, it brings
But closer in its wide, alluring thrall,
These guardians of dreamers. Here the din
Of sordid day is hushed, and nameless things
Are seen for what they are; while thro' it all,
Beat the low heart-throbs of the life within!

THE
SPIRIT
OF
THE
NIGHT

XIII.

IT matters not just when; at birth of day,
Or top-most height of sun; or at the rose
Of its fair setting, when the mountains lose
Their frigid white and, blushing, fade away
To faint night-dreamings—any time, I say,
This view is wondrous fair, and I suppose
Is dearer still to him who need not choose
His hour, but has it with him endlessly.

But as for me, to-night I turn aside
From bits of tangled vistas, to the town
Spread sprawling at my feet. The twinkling sky
Is matched below by diamonds multiplied
In dancing lights. . . . I wonder, looking down,
Which is the star-swung space—the low or high?

FROM
GORGEOUS
HEIGHTS

"I TURN ASIDE
FROM BITS OF TANGLED VISTAS"

—From Gorgeous Heights

XIV.

AS some wee infant demonstrates its worth
All gradually, and for its daily food
Receives whatever to fond parenthood
Could best avail,—so these choice bits of earth
First from the city have their legal birth
And nourishment, until each one has stood
The test of boom and, haply, proven good;
(Thus swells the city's ever-widening girth.)

Then presently they stand in strength alone,
Their primal freshness rivalling the call
From fragrant, song-filled woods. Men grant their claim;
They flock at first to see and then to own;
And wouldst thou fain withstand their tempting thrall,
Be wise, O friend, for legion is their name!

SUBURBS

XV.

SOFT twilight settling down; a murmuring throng
Close-banked beside the curb. On either hand
A sharp line fixed; like solid walls they stand,
Immovable and patient. All along
The crowd is duplicated. Here belong
The toiler and the idler, and demand
Is made on all who share this fragrant land
For pride that's more than sentiment and song.

And hark, the band! See now the leaders draw
In sight! The march moves down its glittering ways,
And dazzling floats their glad surprises bring.
These huge designs seem almost without flaw,
These sights the best that all the happy days
Have offered as a tribute to their king!

THE
NIGHT
PAGEANT

XVI.

YE sturdy urchins of the city's breed,
From stern necessity, on its cold flood
Upborne and swept almost aside; ye brood
Of scarcely more than babes! Yet in your need
Playing the man and cancelling mere creed
For active service and crude brotherhood;
What gain is yours to have thus loyal stood
Amid the subtle sloth that would impede!

How fares the strife? What patience have ye wrought
In meeting men? What glean ye from the fray?
Think not the buffets dealt ye unawares
Shall have the power to overrule in thought
What love doth offer for each passing day,
Nor that earth's evil with the good compares!

NEWSBOYS

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Voices Of The City

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